

# Wisconsin Women's Council

Feature Article Series  
June/July 2005


The 2005 Feature Article Series celebrates and recognizes the role of women in transforming Wisconsin's social and economic climate and improving the status of women across the state.

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## Wisconsin's Women's Funds

*Working under the philosophy that when women succeed, communities thrive, Women's Funds improve the lives of individuals and are key building blocks for social and economic success that benefit all Wisconsin's citizens.*

First Lady Jessica Doyle

 On June 6, 2005, the Wisconsin Women's Council and Board and staff members of Wisconsin's community-based Women's Funds met together, for the first time, to share information about the work and priorities of our organizations. Through lively discussion, we explored many of the issues, challenges and opportunities Wisconsin women face in communities around the state. The meeting was a great success, opening doors to improved communications and identifying common agenda items that will undoubtedly prove to be fertile ground for pooling our resources to remove barriers faced by women and girls.

It was shocking to learn that only about 6.5% of the nearly \$40 billion in grant monies given out annually in the United States goes to programs that serve women and girls. Women's Funds developed out of the need for permanent endowed sources of funding dedicated to women and girls. Women's Funds also empower all women – whether they can afford \$10 or \$10,000 – to become philanthropists and participate in shaping the future of their communities.

Wisconsin can be proud that there are now 11 Women's Funds linked to community foundations across the state, with combined assets totaling \$7.5 million and over \$320,000 annually in grantmaking. As funding leaders for women and girls, the women who serve as their board members, directors and program staff are dedicated to creating positive changes in their local communities, and through their combined efforts, to improving the status of women and girls across the state of Wisconsin.

The meeting was capped by a wonderful reception at the Executive Residence hosted by First Lady Jessica Doyle. Lieutenant Governor Barbara Lawton, who has a long history of support and involvement with Wisconsin's women's funds, also addressed the guests. As did Elaine Maly, Director of the Women's Fund of Greater Milwaukee, and Jane Garton, Director of the Women's Fund for the Fox Valley Region, who inspired us with their insights on the importance of women's funds and some of the challenges and successes in moving their organizations forward. This month's Feature Article offers a summary of Ms. Maly and Ms. Garton's remarks.

Christine Lidbury  
Executive Director

## The Case for Women's Funds

by Elaine Maly

*Who of you does not want to earn less money for the same job as a man?*

*Who does not want their gender to prevent their (or your children's or grandchildren's) access to political power or to power in the business world?*

*Who doesn't want to experience any kind of discrimination?*

I have news for you. You are a feminist.

Women's Funds were started by feminists because women's funds are a powerful solution.

### 1. Women continue to be oppressed.

This is true to varying degrees all over the world. According to the *Status of Women in Wisconsin Update* published recently by Institute for Women's Policy Research and the Women's Fund of Greater Milwaukee, along with several other Women's Funds:

To get the best the U.S. has to offer women, we would have to:

- ❖ Work in Washington, DC
- ❖ Start business in Maryland
- ❖ Have a baby in Hawaii
- ❖ Receive medical care in Utah
- ❖ Run for office in Washington state

Even if we did all that, it would take more than 50 years to achieve wage parity.

Using comparative data, the report provides a basis for comparison between Wisconsin women and women from around the United States in key areas of political participation, employment and earnings social and economic autonomy, reproductive rights, and health and well being.

The report reveals that women in Wisconsin are highly engaged in the workforce, are voting in high numbers and making gains in statewide political leadership. However, Wisconsin struggles with significant wage inequities, racial disparities and low rates of women's college completion and business ownership.

### Wisconsin women ...

#### Work

More than 65% of Wisconsin women participate in the labor force compared with 58% of women nationally. Including 75% of women with children under age 18, and 71% of women with children under six.

**Vote** Wisconsin ranks 8<sup>th</sup> in the nation for women's voter registration and 5<sup>th</sup> for voter turn out.

**Lead** Women hold 3 of Wisconsin's most visible statewide elected offices. The proportion of women in the state legislature is 27.3% compared with 22.4% for the nation.

### **Wisconsin women need ...**

**Economic Equity** Women earned 71.1 cents to \$1 earned by men in the state, ranking 45<sup>th</sup> nationally.

Women's representation in managerial and professional occupations ranks 43<sup>rd</sup> in the nation and 4<sup>th</sup> in our region.

24.4% of businesses are women owned, ranking 33 – the lowest in our region.

**Better Educational Outcomes** 21.7% of WI women have 4 or more years of college, ranking 29th nationally.

73% of Hmong women ages 25 and older have less than a high school education.

**Economic Justice for Women of Color** While only 8% of all Wisconsin women live in poverty, 30% of African American women, 21% of Hispanic women and 20% of Native women live in poverty.

The wage gap is greater for women of color. African American women earn 63 cents and Hispanic women 59 cents compared with wages earned by white men.

**Better Political Representation** Women in elected office had the biggest improvement from 2002 to 2004, increasing Wisconsin's rank from 26 to 19, yet Wisconsin lags behind in national representation for women.

**Better Protection for Reproductive Rights** Overall ranking went from 48 in 2002 to 34 in 2004 in part due to Wisconsin's election of a pro-choice governor and other factors.

**Better Health Outcomes for all Women, especially Women of Color** Infant mortality in Wisconsin is 18.7 per 1,000 for African American women, compared to 5.6 for white women and 7.2 for Hispanic women.

Heart disease is lower per 100,000 for Hispanics (73.1) and Asians (109.4) compared with white women (183). Rates are higher for African American (241.9) and Native (211.7) women.

## 2. Improving women's lives changes everything.

Women and girls are good investments.

*"Educate a woman, and you educate a family, give a woman health care and a family has health care, and an economically secure woman means an economically secure family."*

*"When women are fully involved, the benefits can be seen immediately: families are healthier; they are better fed; their income, savings, and reinvestment go up. And what is true of families is true of communities and eventually, the world."*

Kofi Annan, Secretary-General of the United Nations

Amartya Sen, a Nobel Laureate and economist concurs: "There is now overwhelming evidence that women's empowerment through schooling, employment opportunities and economic development has the most far-reaching effect in improving the lives of all... men, women and children."

When women prosper, their families and communities receive the benefits. Women provide for children, care for the elderly and give back to their communities as volunteers and philanthropists. Women entrepreneurs donate 5.2% to charity, compared to the private industry average of 1.3%.

We know all this and yet less than 7% of private funding in the U.S. goes to programs for women and girls.

## 3. Women have the power.

Women move resources around the world and women give back. Women in the U.S. make 80% of purchasing decisions making us the largest economy in the world.

In 2004, an estimated 47.7% (10.6 million) of all privately-held businesses in the U.S. were 50% or more owned by women. These firms generated \$2.46 trillion in sales and employed 19.1 million people across the country.

## 4. Women's Funds make sense.

*"The law cannot do the major part of winning equality for women. Women must do it for themselves. They must become revolutionaries"*  
Shirley Chisholm

Over the past 20 years, there has been a world wide movement to build women's funds for just these reasons. We share similar values and a nontraditional approach to philanthropy.

## Are Women's Fund different from other grant-making organizations?

Although there are many existing progressive funds and foundations that have a strong history of funding social issues, there weren't any that focused solely on women's and girls' issues before the emergence of women's funds. That which receives funding gets done, I always say.

- ❖ Women's funds support *gender responsive*, innovative, and effective, solutions to age-old problems.
- ❖ Women's funds support new social change strategies. We're working to change public perception of women and we're addressing the connectedness of global, national, and local women.
- ❖ Women's funds also create unique partnerships with their grantees, creating collaborative relationships, and eroding the distinction between funders and grantees.
- ❖ Women's funds bring people together from different walks of life who would never meet on the street, such as through our annual celebration of donors and grantees.

If you give money to an organization that addresses domestic violence, you're giving money to address a specific problem in a specific area. You are addressing a vital need. But only one. Giving to a Women's Fund you are investing in the collective power of women to create change—women who are working together to solve an array of interconnected problems.

More than 100 women's and girls' funds are thriving throughout the US and abroad. In the last 15 years, we've collectively raised more than \$400 million.

The old adage says:

If you give a man a fish, he will eat for a day, but if you teach a man to fish he will eat for a lifetime.

In the world of Women's Funds, we say:

If you give a woman a fish she will feed her family first and might possibly go hungry. If you teach a woman to fish she will feed her family until outside forces take away her fishing rights or pollute the lake. If you empower women with the resources and access to community capital ...

they will buy the lake,  
feed their families,  
keep the lake clean,  
and have something to pass on for generations to come.

Women's Funds are about building sustainable community capital in order to support women and girls who are ready to buy the lake.

## One Women's Fund's Path to Success

by Jane Garton

Women are not all of one voice when it comes to politics or projects. If we have 12 people at the table, we often start with a dozen different ways of framing an issue. Our strength lies in blending those differences to achieve a stronger outcome.

We have changed the nature of our conversations over time. In 1999, our Women's Fund did a needs assessment to determine where we should be directing our grantmaking. At that time, when the economy of the state was doing well, we found that even in our prosperous area an absence of "jobs with a living wage" presented a huge challenge to women.

How would we take that on, we wondered? It was big . . . almost too big. We would announce the results and expand the awareness of this need. And then we would focus our grantmaking upon Health Care related issues, a close #2 in the needs' rankings.

We actually got weak grant requests for health care in Year One, but every grant awarded in the second year was tied to economic self-sufficiency.

We were the first group to ever ask questions specific to women's needs in our area with the intention of paying attention to those needs. When the next community-wide needs assessment is done next year, we will ask to have our questions added to the overall research and treated with equal importance with other community "quality of life" inquiries.

If we wanted to accomplish social change – even of a small magnitude – we learned to trust our research and have high expectations of the organizations in our community.

We talk about money more now because we are not a membership organization, we are an endowment – which is, in effect, a financial institution.

We try to anticipate the needs of our sisters in the community and how different the needs look in 2005 than they looked just three years ago: *What will women returning from the war in Iraq need when they return home? How can the complexities of multi-generational caregiving done by women be eased? Will there be a place for elderly Hmong women refugees to gather in this new land?*

In the Fox Valley, the Women's Fund knows its role is to cultivate philanthropists to fund causes important to women.

***Invest in Her*** is the tag line for the Fox Valley Women's Fund – a mantra of sorts to bring opportunities and donors together. We never want to say: "It's too bad we didn't raise the money." That's our work and we are getting better at it every week.

### About the Authors

Elaine Maly is Director of the Women's Fund of Greater Milwaukee. She has more than 20 years of leadership experience in the nonprofit industry with an emphasis on women and girls. Elaine was recognized as a Woman of Influence by the Business Journal serving Greater Milwaukee in 2003 for her leadership role in the Status of Women in Wisconsin Report. She joined the Fund as Director in 2002 with the goal of substantially increasing the endowment, increasing diversity, and transitioning to a social change grantmaking platform. Among her many activities, Elaine holds volunteer positions with the Women's Funding Network, an international association of women's funds and the Institute for Women's Policy Research. For more information, visit their web site at: <http://www.womensfund.com>.

Jane Garton is Executive Director of the Women's Fund for the Fox Valley Region. She was one of the Fund's founding donors and has served on many of the Women's Fund committees over the last 10 years. Jane joined the Fund as Executive Director in October 2003. She is currently part of the Women's Funding Network's 2005 Leader Network, funded by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation. For more information, visit their web site at: [http://www.cffoxvalley.org/womens\\_fund.html](http://www.cffoxvalley.org/womens_fund.html)

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The Wisconsin Women's Council promotes initiatives that empower women,  
serves as a clearinghouse for information on women's programs,  
and promotes unique partnerships to address issues affecting Wisconsin women.

visit our website at: [womenscouncil.wi.gov](http://womenscouncil.wi.gov)